

RELIGION AND GOVERNANCE

Re-thinking the American Perspective on Church and State

A monograph by

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RELIGION AND GOVERNANCE

Preliminary Remarks

By way of an introduction to the political philosophy presented in this monograph I offer a few preliminary remarks. To my way of thinking, the insight, offered by Derek Davis sums up very well the rationale for maintaining a separation between religion and governance. He writes: “There must be renewed efforts to increase respect by all political, religious, and social institutions for the modern view that political society’s primary interests are in fostering peace, justice, freedom and equality, not in advancing religion. This is the basic meaning of the separation of church and state. The obvious tension here, of course, is that historically, religion has been the basis for every dimension of life, including the political. In the final analysis, we, as members of the human community, owe it to ourselves and to our progeny to make religious liberty a reality of everyone. There is no more important project as we enter the twenty-first century.”¹

The diversity of the human community and the imperfection of the human condition make impossible an acceptable concept of a workable union of church and state as the American experience has shown. The lesson to be learned by political philosophers today is not to attempt the unity of religion and governance. The faithful of any religious system of belief ought to draw their identity from their history, language and cultural experience not their form of governance. Forms of governance are politically constituted out of a nation’s history and culture. In short, the role of governance with respect to religion should be to protect all religious perspectives, rather

¹ Davis, “Thoughts on Religious Persecution Around the Globe,” p. 287.

than be the advocate of one. For this to be achieved, within the contemporary world, the narrow church and state understanding will need to be reconceived as a broader relationship between religion and governance. To profit philosophically from the rationale of this essay the reader will need to keep in mind this distinction.

The topic of the separation of church and state, or as I discuss it in this monograph as the separation of religion and governance, is always a timely one in the North American political context.² To justify the changing of the terms and shift the emphasis, I appeal to Adolf Darlap's reasoning in framing the church and state question for a contemporary discussion. He writes:

“At the present time, as the One World crystalizes, when the new unity of world history is making the history of the nations the relevant setting of the universal Church, when the universal Church is as it were a diaspora nearly everywhere in a pluralist society, the question and answer may be drawn up more appropriately.”³

Both religion and governance may be understood today as social *activities*. Their forms of activity are culturally determined and vary according to their culture and context. Vatican II taught that the state and the church exist as societal *constructs*, entities whose members determine their social form. To my mind, the issues arising today in the church and state relationship may be addressed by political philosophers more satisfactorily in terms of religion and governance understood as actions performed by human beings. (It seems that religion and self-governance are reserved to human beings.) There are various reasons for this change in terminology. Among them are: 1) the continuing growth of nationalism and the role of religion in national and international affairs, 2) religious belief, or lack of it in the contemporary world, and 3) the growth of pluralism,

² I do not discuss the place of religion in the public forum, but, rather the relationship between religion (as supernatural belief system) and governance (as civil organization).

³ *Sacramentum Mundi*, s.v. ‘Religion,’ p. 284.

or as I like to conceive of it phenomenologically, the awareness of plurality. Further, I add to these reasons the increasing encounters of the world's faiths with each other, and the increasing recognition of liberty to practice one's faith within all nations on the face of the earth. Since these circumstances are likely to continue well into the future, tensions and conflicts are bound to occur in the relationship between church and state, as currently understood. However, these tensions need not be transferred to an understanding of the relationship between religion and governance.

In this monograph, I focus primarily on the American context in discussing the relationship between religion and governance. However, the American experience may be applied within all other national and cultural contexts. Thus, I include in this monograph a particular reflection on the situation as it has unfolded in Québec, Canada. Finally, I briefly consider atheism given that as a unique social phenomenon it has arisen within Christianity with corresponding effects on religion and governance.⁴

The inspiration to undertake this monograph came after I obtained a copy of *Readings on Church and State* edited by James E. Wood, Jr. Upon reading the various essays in the book, I was motivated to examine the relationship between the concepts of religion and governance, rather than those of church and state. I write this monograph on political philosophy for an educated audience and an interested public, following closely the arguments and perspectives put forward by the various authors in *Readings on Church and State*.

⁴ Interestingly, Vatican II noted that "believers themselves...have more than a little to do with the rise of atheism. To the extent that they are careless about their instruction in the faith, or present its teaching falsely...they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the true nature of God... (Flannery, Vatican Council II, para. 19, p. 180).

The view I favour is suggested by a reasoned, not rational political theory which posits that the activity of civil governance is the result of a practical necessity and is dependent upon the popular will of the people. If interpreted strictly, the constitution of civil governance will exclude the religious authorities from the exercise of any power of governance of its citizens by the state since civil political theory rejects the divine right of kings. A rational political theory is one with roots in classical Greek philosophy. But, a reasoned political theory presents political issues phenomenologically since it connects notions of governing consciously, coherently and purposively.

Chapter One, consists of a series of reflections on significant topics that arose within colonial New England; a brief consideration of Eastern Orthodoxy, and non-Christian religions as they impinge on the theme of this monograph. Chapter Two reviews the theological perspective presented by Vatican II concerning Roman Catholicism and civil government. In this chapter I suggest a need for a philosophical shift in addressing the issue of church and state which is the narrower concept, to the concept of religion and governance which is the broader one. Chapter Three is a study of case in point, that is, the Province of Québec in Canada. And, I include a brief discussion on the lesson learned from the Cuban experience as detailed by Leslie Dewart in *Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson of Cuba*. Finally, in Chapter Four there is a short note on the understanding of modern atheism.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN COLONIAL AMERICA AND BEYOND: TEN REFLECTIONS

In light of the following reflections concerning Church and State, I suggest that contemporary church authorities, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox, like intellectuals (philosophers and scientists), have no constitutional responsibility for public policy. Intellectual and scientific professionals, are not elected as officials with a mandate to incorporate their beliefs, sacred or secular, into public policy. In fact, they may even be somewhat removed from the roots of the problems they address in their professional capacity. However, from a phenomenological philosophical perspective of religion and governance this issue needs to be re-considered. Politicians alone are not responsible for the future relationships between religion and governance in contemporary society but need to work with non-political professionals, i.e., intellectuals (clergy) and scientists.

Reflection No. 1

Religious freedom, that is, freedom from political interference in matters of Christian faith, is a moral value clearly evident in the North American colonies from their earliest days. Religious freedom was not brought from Europe by the founding fathers of the American Constitution. Rather, religious freedom is proper to the American experience. Its roots are unique and of a particular experience of the early colonists. Yet, Wendy Dackson maintains that the Anglican cleric Richard Hooker, (1554–1600) living in England, wrote *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, along the same trajectory of thinking as characteristic of the colonists.⁵ In the 1640's, religious liberty and religious toleration were literally unknown in the Europe that the colonists left behind. As

⁵ Dackson, *Journal of Church and State*, (p. 132).

Crane Brinton notes, though, some European values were transferred to American soil.⁶ The Europe of the 17th Century had developed a practical and functioning union of church and state which was firmly established. In this arrangement, the church influenced the moral and social values of the state and the state protected the rights and privileges of the church. This mutual arrangement coloured the understanding we have today of the issue which I discuss here from the point of view of the unity, not the union, of religion and governance. This notion of unity is contained, in germ, in the documents of Vatican II. Discussing the form of unity of religion and governance desired the council states:

"Although the church altogether rejects atheism, it nevertheless sincerely proclaims that all men and women, those who believe as well as those who do not, should help to establish right order in this world where all live together....The church therefore deplores the discrimination between believers and unbelievers which some civil authorities unjustly practice, in defiance of the fundamental rights of the human person."⁷

In the colonies, the various states legislated for different systems of ecclesiastical support. Christian religious beliefs were often regarded as necessary to maintain a national union within the emerging colonial governments. This belief in national union they did bring with them from Europe.

In the mind of the colonists, the Europe of the 17th Century was filled with religious wars and persecutions that were common among the various nations. Catholic Spain and France persecuted Protestants in their countries and in the Protestant Low Countries the reverse was the

⁶ "The seventeenth-century British colonists who came to Virginia and New England brought with them a surprising amount of the Middle Ages – commons, stocks and pillories, belief in witches, traces of medieval domestic architecture. The colonists of New France even brought with them seigneurs and the manorial system, the impress of which still remains in the province of Quebec." Brinton, *Shaping of Modern Thought*, (p. 23).

⁷ Flannery, *Vatican II*, "Gaudium et Spes," (p. 184).

case. Each of the religious confessions and denominations believed that God was on its side. However, religious tension was not reserved to the Continent. The British Isles were also affected. With respect to the dominance of either Catholic or Protestant congregations it was the case that “in England the particular group to be mistreated depended upon the religion of the sovereign in power at the time.”⁸

One may view religion as a motive for colonization, but it was not the dominant motivating factor of those living in the colonies. A variety of reasons motivated the English colonization of North America. Imperialism, economics, political and social pressures, including a humane understanding of the social order, all played a part. However, as historical research shows missionary and religious activity was evident in most charters to some degree. Legal documents enacted by the colonists settling in the New World, Pilgrims, Quakers, French Huguenots, German Pietists and Roman Catholics, all desired to seek refuge from religious persecution in their respective homelands in Europe. Subsequently, they all sought to enshrine some sort of religious protection in their respective colonial laws.

Yet, even though they brought their unpleasant experiences and negative memories of European persecution with them it often happened that in the colonies those who sought religious freedom for themselves did not necessarily extend it to others. Religious minorities, holding dissimilar or opposite beliefs from the dominant religious group, were often denied the same religious freedom that the dominant group had sought and obtained in the New World.

Concerning the form of government appropriate for any traditional religious bodies, that is, the hierarchical churches, in the colonies democracy was not an option – at least if the scriptures

⁸ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 10).

were to be followed the theologians taught. In the theological interpretation of the day, theocracy was the form of government as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. The clergy and the religious magistrates of the colonial days constantly reminded the people of this “revealed truth.” The alliance of the clergy and magistrates formed a strong code of conduct and discipline which few of the faithful in the colonies would dare resist. The truth is, however, that most likely many dissidents complied outwardly with public requirements of a theocracy, but privately had their reservations as to its utility or practical use in the New World.

In colonial times, Rhode Island was a clear exception to the general situation in the New World. In what was to become the State of Rhode Island, neither the church, nor any sect, ever gained a legally established status. In its practice of respecting religious freedom for all, from the beginning of its charter Rhode Island anticipated an arrangement of religious affairs between church and state that later American jurists enacted as the norm. That is, the clear separation of church and state. The legacy of Rhode Island’s initial legislation is such that by the end of the colonial period there was greater freedom of religious expression in the New World than in the Old World.

The fact of the freedom of religious expression from political interference as a *social* reality in the New World must be taken into account when considering the relationship between church and state. Vatican II, however, envisions religious freedom from a different perspective. The freedom for religious expression is envisioned as an *individual* reality and in personal terms given that the right to this freedom is based on the dignity of the person made in the image and likeness of God.

“The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that everyone should be immune from coercion by individuals, social groups, and

every human power so that, within due limits, no men or women are forced to act against their convictions nor are any persons to be restrained from acting in accordance with their convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others.”⁹ This shift from the social to the individual represents a shift in philosophical understanding from a scholastic tradition to a contemporary phenomenological perspective.

Given our contemporary philosophical and cultural perspectives we must understand the decisions of the colonial leaders concerning issues of church and state as properly normative for their day. Even though their understanding of biblical interpretation may seem antiquated and irrelevant to us. Like us in our time, the colonists were affected by the culture of their time and place.

Reflection No. 2

The idea of the separation of church and state distinguishes the modern world from the medieval one. I introduce, however, the notion of the separation of religion and governance to distinguish the modern world from the contemporary postmodern one. In the modern world, Protestant churches, as a rule, opposed any alliance between church and state and focus on personal and individual redemption rather than social or collective redemption. In general, from their point of view the less involvement there is with the organization of the state, school, hierarchy and society, the better life is. This point of view is reflected the position of the political left. On the political right, there is a pragmatism that favoured some type of an organized alliance between church and state, but not of the Old World variety.

⁹ Flannery, *Vatican II*, “*Dignitatis Humanae*,” (p. 552).

Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Dutch Reformed Christians and Scottish Presbyterians, who enjoyed establishment in Europe, did not enjoy establishment in America. Congregationalism in the New England colonies and Anglicanism in the Southern colonies were the only religious movements that qualified for possible establishment in America. And, they were the only two religious societies interested in doing so. But, it was, in fact, the case that the various groups of Protestants, Congregationalists, and Anglicans constituted a mixed body of believers in the New World with none having a monopoly of influence over the civil authorities.

In the 18th century many colonists were fearful that Anglican bishops would be sent to America and would exercise spiritual and temporal authority over them as they did in England. The thought of Anglican bishops exercising power over their own subjects at home, as well as over colonial dissident churches abroad, raised fear and resistance in the minds of the colonists. This fear prompted many Southern Anglicans to believe that they could subscribe to Anglican Church doctrine without accepting the church's hierarchy. They decided to govern themselves accordingly. In addition, there was the belief that the arrival of Anglican bishops who would live in the colonies would also impede "any hope of amiable relations with dissenters." Dissent being a goal of many of the American colonists.¹⁰

The possible loss of their colonial charters, taxes imposed for the support of the Anglican Church, and the reservation of public offices to members of the Church of England were some of the issues provoking fear on the part of the dissenters. These fears bound all the colonies together in a mutual anxiety over ecclesiastical power being transplanted from the Old World to the New. Yet, the leaders of the religious denominations were not united in a common cause and the

¹⁰ Woods, *Readings*, (p. 30).

dissenters among them were a minority. That being the case, the clergy of the dominant congregation and the authorities of the state could effectively ignore complaints about dissenters' rights. To be sure, then, no one group could be assured of establishment in the America colonies under these conditions.

Natural religion, or Deism as it is known by some theologians, contributed directly to prevent establishment of any one religious body. Deism, employing the insights of rationalism, inspired a confidence in human philosophical thought. Revelation, as an intuitive experience of a divine object, and its subsequent theological expression was unable to compete directly with rational thought as a proper intellectual response. In the colonial period of America, three possible philosophical and theological positions among the clergy and parishioners may be identified: 1) reason and revelation, 2) reason above revelation, and 3) reason instead of revelation. It ought to be noted that Deism does not, in fact, threaten organized religion. It only threatens an established denomination when that denomination is understood to be an artificial social and intellectual construction not found within the natural relationships of persons, i.e., coercive government. In the natural order, the individual as a creature made in God's image and likeness and in conscience free, is recognized by philosophers and theologians as existing prior to any corporate organization of believers. In other words, there is no natural organization in religious governance. The form of governance is what the people say it is. This understanding arises from the shift away from traditional, or classical philosophical understanding, to phenomenological philosophical understanding of religion and governance.

Reflection No. 3

The vocabulary of "church vs state" comes from Europe and does not accurately describe the American experience of the colonists. The American experience is based on a multiplicity of

Churches, or denominations, and a dispersion of political power among local, state and federal government agencies. The long-term understanding, originating in Europe, that religion could not be preserved without the help of government was challenged in America. There were no precedents in the colonial experience of America to guide civil authorities as they laid out the terms for separation for church and state within the various charters and constitutions of the colonies. Specific issues arising within the relationship between church and state were addressed by the legislators as they arose in the experience of the people. In our time, history is about to repeat itself, as it were. Religion and governance will need to address the issues arising from their relationship within a phenomenological political philosophy, not classical political philosophy.

When it came to the separation of church and state the practice of the colonists was to identify a distinguishing, or dividing line, as it were, rather than a wall, to separate church and state. The difference between a dividing line and a wall is that a dividing line allows for a dynamic relationship between two social entities, as opposed to a wall, which indicates a solid barrier, a static obstruction, between the two social entities. Religious denominations, or ecclesiastical bodies in the colonies had no recognized legal status in their own right. But many of them did exercise control over their assets through a board of management, often known as Trustees, created through the civil authority. Thus, the civil authorities and the ecclesiastical authorities were legally bound together in a formal temporal relationship.

The American belief that sovereignty resides in the people, who must consent to be governed, provoked many theological disputes in the colonies. One such theological dispute, that continues today, is that the popular sovereignty of the people often denies that God is the source of all authority. Naturally, this view is problematic for religion, particularly in moral and ethical issues, and more will be said about this in Chapter Four, "Atheism or Antitheism."

The civil authority had little opportunity to formally intervene in the internal affairs of the congregations within the colonies. But the civil authority could be called upon to settle differences between religious sects, congregations or churches. But such a request was made by the religious body only if the biblical injunction failed. That is, Christians ought to settle their disputes internally without going to civil court (1 Corinthians 6:1-7). Decisions would be rendered in contentious circumstances based on the civil authority's concept of the nature of humanity (although influenced by the Christian religion) and the context in which the civil authority and the congregation found themselves. What we understand today as human rights traces its conception to this early understanding of the relationship between church and state which is, in fact, a political as well as a theological issue. Thus, in the postmodern world, the future of the theological understanding of religion will have an effect on governance, but not in the European sense of church and state. Sidney Mead notes: "that at the heart of the matter for religionists is, in no traditional sense, an issue between 'church' and 'state,' but the theological issue between the particularistic theologies of the 'sects' and the cosmopolitan theology of the Republic. But, I cannot claim competence in this area, and wish that more of our professional theologians would take up the question."¹¹ Note Mead's dissenting view that the Republic subscribes to a theology of some sort. The Republic is not merely secular in his view.

In the contemporary world, the phenomenon of secularization as a cultural process distinct from secularism, attracts the attention of many historians of modern religion. Charles Davis, in *God's Grace in History*, writes positively of the process of secularization. But also, he writes in *A Question of Conscience*, written a year later in 1967 that "it is now necessary to inquire more closely into the reasons why secularization has been *accompanied* by secularism, which means the

¹¹ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 53).

exclusion of the sacred altogether.”¹² This distinction is confirmed by the *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* which appeared ten years later in 1977.¹³

But there is another issue that attracts the attention of the historians of colonial America. In colonial America, the notion of disestablishment was virtually accepted by those who sought freedom from the legal establishment as it had been known in England. Rather than being recognized by law, establishment in colonial America was realized by ethos, that is, by favouring the habits, customs and ideas rooted in the experience of the colonists in general. As the notion of ethos developed and expanded, it shifted the arguments of traditional philosophy and theology, which had supported legal establishment in the Old World, to arguments based on the utility of religion as advocating a value, which was at the service of the civil authority. Vatican II discussed its own understanding of this argument, particularly Chapter IV, “The Role of the Church in the Modern World,” of *Gaudium et Spes*. In colonial America, religion, as expressed through the ethos of the age, was lived through the “national churches” which were established *de facto* since they existed in the hearts of the citizens and without the necessity of civil legislation. They existed only and authentically through an ethnic/cultural expression, with no political establishment.

Thus, the American religious experience began within practical existential adjustments rather than claims of theological truth or classical philosophy. This, of course, presented political problems for the colonists when it came to nation-building in the face of religious pluralism. Today, however, the political question is not one of church and state but of religion and governance and

¹² Davis, *A Question of Conscience*, (p. 185).

¹³ Secularism: the rejection of religion following upon the process of secularization. Secularization: a process of diminishing interest in questions and attitudes concerning religion’s prestige and power.

how to unite a nation within a plurality of expressions of the faith.¹⁴ In a different context, it is interesting to remember how short-lived in the public mind was the concept of “Defender of Faiths” promoted by HRH The Prince of Wales. But that belongs to the history of another tradition.

Reflection No. 4

In 1888 most inhabitants of America, who formerly lived in Europe, believed that America was a favoured land, not just geographically and out of reach of the problems in Europe, but also favoured by God to advance the divine purpose of the Supreme Architect of the universe. Rooted in this belief was that the “equation of the United States with Israel was to be a refrain throughout most of the nineteenth century in tracts, treatises, sermons, and addresses, as well in the writings of the nation’s leading literary figures.”¹⁵ As well, this theme was echoed by politicians and preachers in their rhetoric. However, by the middle of the 20th Century, due to secularization, the Hebraic metaphors disappeared from the country’s political stage. More importantly than the disappearance of the Hebraic metaphors, the public observances of the faith, especially after World War I, became private affairs rather than continuing as communal affairs publicly expressed. The significance of the religious observances in the colonies was slowly being forgotten and any national blessing was becoming viewed as originating with the American people themselves rather than with God. I would argue that this shift to a secular humanism may be understood through a dehellenized philosophy.¹⁶ Contemporary secular humanism is not to be confused with the

¹⁴ For the interested reader, I have discussed the distinction between pluralism and plurality in different contexts. See Savage & Nicholl, *Faith, Hope and Charity as Character Traits in Adler’s Individual Psychology*, (pp. 109-11), and Savage, *Phenomenological Philosophy and Reconstruction in Western Theism*, (p. 62).

¹⁵ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 88).

¹⁶ Dehellenization is a philosophical process promoted by the philosopher Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) to illustrate the positive creation of future belief within the Western cultural context.

humanism of the Renaissance which was a revival of classical learning and stressed humanity's enjoying the present moments of life.

Reflection No.5

Today, the religious scene changes rapidly in American culture. This calls for some understanding even if it means only to clarify a complex and confused scene. An historical appreciation of the way the American colonists had shaped their history to arrive at the current situation is needed. The current state of affairs in America is due to the interaction of various historical factors: the nation, the church and a private notion of faith. I would add the influence of the contemporary philosophical perspective of Vatican II. The Council introduced a movement from an exclusively scholastic perspective in Christian theology concerning matters of church and state to a phenomenological perspective, that is, religion and governance. (Although phenomenology is not well known in North America as an interpretive philosophy, John Kobler's book, *Vatican II and Phenomenological Reflections on the Life-World of the Church*, should be of interest to serious theologians.)

Today, while the traditional churches appear to be in decline there is a feeling of a religious impulse which appears to be diffused throughout the North American culture. "The diagnosis for American religion, as for so much of our culture, is most probably a form of identity diffusion," writes Conrad Cherry.¹⁷ He maintains that clues to the present religious confusion are found in the notions of American nationalism and individualism. As a phenomenological philosopher, I would tend to look for clues of our confusion in American nationality and individuality, terms that are not to be equated with nationalism or individualism. I have discussed the distinction between "-ism" and "-

¹⁷ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 100).

ity” words in *A Future of Disbelief? Philosophy in a Dehellenized Age with Implications for Theology*. From the early 19th century Americans valued churches as much for their governing and political roles as their religious role in a moral function in civil society. Thus, religion has served as an agent of Americanization and nationalism, and as an instrument of privatized piety. The Christian religion is losing these traditional roles in contemporary society which accounts for the identity diffusion in the current American religious culture.

Contemporary North America (U.S.A.) is not a nation with many shared religious symbols. To date, it has not tolerated religious subcultures well. Thus, in the minds of some philosophers, theologians and sociologists what is required is a change that accommodates a shared symbolism which meets the basic needs of American citizens, as well as non-citizens to give form and order to their contemporary experience. These symbols must unite those living in the United States and eliminate the destructive conflicts of religion and establish a cooperative plurality (not pluralism) within a national existence. In addition, this task requires that North American citizens overcome any narrow nationalism, (not nationality), without losing contact with their national ethos.

“In 1940 Congress took the church out of religion. In 1965 the Supreme Court took God out of religion and in 1970 it took religion out of religion.”¹⁸ This observation reflects an emergence of a North American pattern with respect to the future relationship of religion and governance. That pattern notwithstanding, religious groups often seek to impose their particular value systems on the community at large, and often attempt to engage the coercive cooperation of the state to achieve this dominance.

¹⁸ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 127).

Any religious institution, which fills a specific need and appears to have disappeared from the culture of the nation, will need to find a new purpose, or self-expression, to recover its role in society. In World War I, an American chaplain could comfort the troops with the belief that “God is with us.” While appealing to the same faith and deity a German chaplain could assure the troops, “Gott mit uns.” Critical thinkers of any ilk no longer accept this relationship as reflective of the true relationship between the church and the state; the state claiming God’s favour. I suggest that this new role for religion in society is “service” as understood by the theologians of Vatican II. “The church is not motivated by earthly ambition but it is interested in one thing only — to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served.”¹⁹ The concept of Christian service promoted by Vatican II shifted theological interpretation away from the WW I concept of God as having national favourites.

Reflection No. 6

Opposed to the strict separation of religion and governance is the notion of patriotism, that is, where one’s faith and nationalism being combined. Patriotism, as traditionally defined, needs re-assessment given that it combines one’s faith and nationality. The British, “God Save the Queen,” and “God Bless America” are among the most well-known of patriotic songs. Ironically, the notion of patriotic songs has its origin in the Old Testament idea of monarchy. “In building, dedicating and blessing the temple, Solomon confirms and consolidates the link established by his father between the monarchy and the public worship of God. Here is a further step towards civic religion, the close association between church and state and especially established between church and monarchy.”²⁰ But Ian Bradley also writes: “While I am in many ways advocating that divinity

¹⁹ Flannery, *Vatican II*, “Gaudium et Spes,” (p. 165).

²⁰ Bradley, *God Save the Queen*, (p.17).

should indeed continue to hedge the monarchy...[I am] not suggesting that monarchy is the only system of government compatible with Christianity. I fully accept that many Christians find that their faith leads them to espouse the cause of republicanism.”²¹ That patriotic religion is a foundation of the American way of life is held to be the case by many contemporary academics. These individuals do not interpret the separation of church and state as necessarily eliminating the cultural and religious heritage of the nation. Nor do they support the combination of a cultural and religious heritage in the European sense of Christendom. Further, within this perspective North Americans tend not to be religious in such a way that compels the irreligious among them to make a commitment to something in which they do not believe. The irreligious have the freedom for “unbelief,” which is to be distinguished from “disbelief.”²²

The American version of secularism did not arise as any conscious state policy. But it arose from the deeper theological issues of the modern age. There remained a mutual relationship between church and state, suggesting a modern version of theocracy. In short, American secularism developed as a reaction to this theocracy. However, the secularization of society in contemporary America is still not always effectively observed. And some sociologists suggest that a secular version of the Protestant ethos has been adopted in place of a strict secularism.²³

Freedom of religion expression can also mean freedom from religion and, as well, the freedom to be irreligious. Religious liberty and freedom of expression are political notions which, to my mind, might better express their meaning when understood in terms of freedom of conscience. One’s freedom of conscience does not restrict one’s freedom to practice his or her religion, and as well,

²¹ Bradley, *God Save the Queen*, (p. xviii).

²² I discuss this distinction in, *A Future for Disbelief: Philosophy in a Dehellenized Age with Implications for Theology*.

²³ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 146).

does not make religion necessary. That is to say, the option to practice no religion allows the opportunity for the believer to freely bring his or her faith into the public forum, but without any requirement for the state to establish it in law. Without state endorsement, religion is properly a confession of the believer's ultimate loyalty to the God, or gods, of his or her understanding. As noted earlier, it is significant that without the intent of privatizing religious belief, Pope John XXIII wrote, in 1963 in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (paragraphs 48-51), that one's conscience is to be free from coercion by the State or any individual.

Reflection No. 7

American civil religion is not a concrete, practical and socially organized society. It is not a positive entity like the other religious traditions in American day to day life. However, it may be understood as a phenomenological notion disclosing an ideology, that is, an ideology embodied within the consciousness of the majority of citizens and subsequently expressed in public life. An historian of religion has written "against the uncritical acceptance of 'civil religion' as if it were a positive entity" constituting American society.²⁴ The concept of American civil religion is a retrospective abstraction arising from historical observation. American civil religion is not a self-reflecting experience of citizens as are proper religions. Not being a self-reflecting experience, it has no predictive capacity for the future of religious belief and practice. That is to say, it is not "scientific" and cannot be studied as a social entity like other organized religions. American civil religion is similar to other concepts such as the Hundred Years' War, the Renaissance, the Reformation, or World War I, in that these events were not recognized or understood as socially conceived movements by those participating in those events. These social abstractions are, in fact,

²⁴ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 186).

phenomenological notions which conceptualize a collection of varied and numberless actions by the human mind.²⁵

Reflection No. 8

With the conversion of Constantine, who ruled the Roman Empire from 306 to 337, a close alliance of Christianity and empire-building was forged. The result was known as Christendom and it remained intact until the 18th Century. The 19th and 20th Centuries reveal a progressive disintegration of Christendom which was a dominant social force in most of Western Europe. Dooyeweerd identifies Christendom as initially being a *Corpus Christianum*, influenced by the ideas of St Augustine, that became a political force during the Middle Ages.²⁶ But in the association between church and state which established Christendom, Ireland and the British Isles were the exceptions to the norm of civil support. The civil authorities, in the Britain of the time, offered little practical assistance to the Christianizing of Ireland by the missionaries. Likewise, none of the Irish missionaries to the Continent were supported by Irish tribal chieftains. Further, once the Irish missionaries were on the Continent few local rulers supported them. Thus, religious influence was able to spread without the assistance of the civil rulers or state.

In the 20th century, Christian expansion remained associated with empire-building but not to the same extent as in earlier ages. Christianity was beginning to demonstrate its ability to survive without Imperial or civil support as it freed itself from the European political yoke. Similar to the situation which led to the Middle Ages, in general, the 19th Century Christian missions, Catholic and Protestant, were beginning to rely less and less on government financial and political support as in the days of Constantine. Subsequently, the question arose in America: "Could the churches

²⁵ I have written about the reality of phenomenological concepts in theology in *Phenomenological Philosophy and Reconstruction in Western Theism*.

²⁶ Dooyeweerd, *Struggle for a Christian Politics*, (p. 19).

which were the fruits of pre-twentieth century missions survive the erasure of the colonialism with which they had been associated?”²⁷ The question was answered positively. This was due to the Western Christian missionary fervor in witnessing to the Gospel. Thus, in the Asian world Christianity grew, not by “Christendom” being transplanted, but by missionary expansion without any association with the State or civil authorities. In the minds of the missionaries such expansion was ordered by the command of Christ (Matthew 28:19) and did not require any tie between church and state. In spite of this religious conviction it is accepted today that Christian missionary work, in addition to spiritual values, imported Western political culture into the East.

Reflection No. 9

The expansion of Protestant Christianity in the modern world has been characterized by the variety of Christian denominations or sects, unlike the expansion of the Roman Catholic Church in the 15th and 16th Centuries, which admitted no variation in ritual or custom. The variety of Protestant Christian denominations led to religious competition and no one denomination was able to claim exclusive dominance over another. Thus, in the Protestant tradition, Christianity was able to exist with differing governing structures and in differing types of political communities.

Globalization has forced Christianity to recognize non-Christian religions as legitimate and authentic in their own right. Globalization has also forced the recognition of the effects of secularization on all religions, not just Christianity. With globalization the various Protestant churches, as they entered missionary territory, had to recognize themselves as minorities in the context of heathen and pagan cultures in the indigenous Oriental and African religions, or ethical systems.

²⁷ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 204).

In Europe, the spread of the non-Christian religions has been due generally to academics and well-educated people showing interest in these religions. Academics interested in the comparative history of religions and comparative philosophy, as well as the psychology of religion, assisted in establishing the influence of these religions in Europe. In America, however, the influence of non-Christian religions came primarily through the immigration of Asians. And once established on the Pacific coast the influence of these religions spread to other parts of the United States.

Reflection No. 10

“Apart from the pre-Constantinian era of church history, and the areas conquered by Islam and the modern situation under the rule of militant atheism, the Orthodox churches show a very strong preference for church-state unity and have been somewhat over-accused of submission to the state, especially by those who try to apply the Latin solution to the perspective of the problem in dealing with this question.”²⁸ Unlike the Western theological outlook, there is no theory of natural law in the Orthodox patristic tradition in terms of physical, social and moral laws being a reflection of ideals arising out of the eternal and immutable mind of God. In short, in Orthodoxy there are no eternal universals after which things are to be patterned as exists in the Latin West. The idea that religious liberty is a necessary concept for the Christian inner spiritual life, or that faith must be free from civil control, is not an issue within the Orthodox perspective.

The Orthodox Churches do not reflect any exclusivity in embracing various forms of political culture or society in their theology. Rather, Orthodox theological interpretation embraces the goal of sanctifying the culture, society and political institutions that give expression to the faith. Such sanctification was achieved, not by the structural union of the separate entities of church and state,

²⁸ Wood, *Readings*, (p. 255).

but, rather, by uniting the sacred and secular in the person of the emperor. In Dooyeweerd's words: "The eastern Roman emperor united in his person the sacerdotium and the imperium, spiritual dignity and temporal authority, thus more or less linking church and state into a unity."²⁹ However, in its political expression the Church did not always maintain its sanctifying purpose as clearly as it could have. "When the Constantinian settlement gave unprecedented occasion for the elaboration and application of what I have termed the 'political' image of the Church, other images might well have been quietly discarded or else left to schismatics like Donatists," or confined within monastic movements which are external to the civil political arena.³⁰ The implication is that spirituality was experienced more purely outside the political structure. Suggesting Western influence, the civil law that originated within the Byzantine Empire was incorporated into the Canons of the Orthodox Churches to various degrees, "although they are subordinate to the canons promulgated by the Church."³¹

The Eastern Orthodox Churches exist as a "universal nation of faith" that subsists within many nations without being identified with any one national ethos in particular. Orthodox Christians believe that each national culture has a right to be recognized as a particular ecclesial body that somehow transcends the culture and politics in which it is embedded. It is not simply one voluntary religious association among others. It follows then, that generally the Orthodox attitude to the state is that of a willingness to cooperate with the civil authorities for the good of society without compromising the doctrine and dogma of the Church. Allowing for a sacramental universality, which was the result of Roman Catholic influence, the Orthodox Churches never totally conflated the notions of Imperial universalism (the state), with religious universality or Catholicity (the

²⁹ Dooyeweerd, *Struggle for a Christian Politics*, (p. 19).

³⁰ Erickson, "Orthodox Canonical Tradition," (p. 165).

³¹ Ferencz, *American Orthodoxy and Parish Congregationalism*, (p. 11).

church). From the point of view of government influence, there is historical evidence that the Eastern emperors interfered with the election of Orthodox bishops in the major cities of the Empire. But, to the contrary, it seems that bishops in the rural areas were elected without any major interference from civil authorities. Further, historians recognize that although perspectives of Roman Catholic Canon Law were incorporated into Orthodox Canon Law, it never became doctrinal and dogmatic as understood in the West.

VATICAN II: PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND GOVERNANCE ³²

Vatican II did not issue any formal document dealing with the question of the separation of church and state. However, the Council did change the perspective of the question from the narrow church and state relationship to the larger perspective of the world and human society. A change to a broader philosophical perspective requires a change in the terms of any subsequent discussion to include this broader understanding in addressing the same issues in the new philosophical context. In the words of Paul Mikat: “Vatican II certainly seems to mark a break with the past, when the question of the Church’s relations with the world and human society was often reduced to the question of church and state.” ³³ Vatican II discussed the topic of church and state under the auspices of religious freedom. History shows that from the earliest Christian times the issue was addressed in terms of the relationship between the two powers often represented by the spiritual and temporal, the Pope and Emperor, and throne and altar, all of which reflected the tradition of the ancient regime of France.

During the reign of Pope Leo XIII, two new concepts were introduced into the discussions on the issue of church and state. One was “the community of the faithful” and the other was “human society.” The individual person was understood to be a member of both communities simultaneously. Thus, the dichotomous understanding that gave rise to the concept of the co-dependency of church and state was beginning to lose its primacy in the minds of Catholic theologians. The link became the person, not the institution.

³² This chapter draws on the perspective of John Courtney Murray, “The Issue of Church and State at Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 27 (December 1966): 580-606.

³³ Mikat, s. v. “Church and State,” *Sacramentum Mundi*, (p. 338).

The notion of co-dependence of church and state had two different meanings depending on the era in which it was used. To Leo XIII it meant the concrete situation in Europe of the 19th century in which the state, the government, was to serve and protect the church. The French Revolution, however, had introduced the process of the laicization which Pope Leo opposed into European Christianity. His perspective is taken today as a retrospective view of European society which he perceived as the golden age of Christian unification of church and state.

Vatican II adopted an alternative perspective, a perspective that opened itself to an indeterminate future. This view was the result of reading the signs of the times that recognized the individuality of the person and the unity of the human family. In short, Vatican II had to decide if the Church would be a custodian of the past or an architect of the future. Thus, the issue of church and state became located within the problematic of an indeterminate ecclesial future, with the community of the faithful constituting part of global humanity.

Vatican II also acknowledged a shift in its understanding of the form of governance within the religiously plural societies of the 20th century. Religiously plural societies acknowledge that some form of constitutional government is required to protect and promote the rights of humanity, as well as, humanity's role in creating a humane global community. Even though this view was an advancement over the social context of Leo XIII, there was no recognition of the rights of atheism at Vatican II (a subject which will be addressed later). For this shift in governance to occur it took the publication of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 for the dignity of the human person in conjunction with the rights of humanity to lay the groundwork for the Second Vatican Council.

At the Council, the church divested itself as defender and promoter of religious truth, except for its own adherents. The Church relied on the government to promote religious freedom, a socio-political concept, instead of religious truth, a philosophical concept, as a right of the human person.

Except in the matter of conscience, which is often more a reactive than proactive approach to religious freedom, philosophy lost ground to the contemporary sciences. As well as this particular theological point of view of replacing its role as defender and promoter of religious truth, thus allowing the state to promote religious freedom, the Church also favoured relinquishing any arrangement that would have given it particular legal privilege in its relationship with any government. In short, at the Council the church recast itself as an independent social institution.

The “great commission” given by Christ to preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15) cannot be understood as opposing government involvement in temporal affairs of the church. This command of Christ is a truth of the revealed order and as such is not subject to the judgment of the civil powers but does not deny their mutual relationship. The Church presents her claim to fulfill this command of Christ by promoting the good of the person in society, but not in a manner that apes the civil power. Further, unlike an option available to civil government, coercive force is not to be used by the Church in its governance of the faithful or of any other human beings.

It is affirmed by the Council that religion is a public social good and not to be reserved to the private internal forum of an individual conscience. Religion, as an expression of the faith, is a matter of the public good in that the government is somehow to assist religion in promoting the truth of human experience. Thus, government is to create conditions favourable to fulfilling the purpose of religion and prevent society from becoming purely secular. And the role of religion in this relationship is to make sure that it is teaching the truth. It must be noted, however that, at this time in its history, it seems that there is no indication from the Catholic Church that the idea of governance occurring with the consent of the governed, in the democratic sense, is an immediate possibility. The hierarchical form of governance is the norm although tempered by the principle subsidiarity.

In his article, Murray identified four trends that represented the mood of *aggiornamento* at the Council. They were: the recognition of human dignity, the rights of the human person, the unity of humanity, and the sanctification of secular activity in the world. This last trend of sanctifying secular activity is evidenced within the Church by the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*. The reader will recall that in Orthodoxy there is a parallel idea that the Church is sanctifier of the secular order.

QUEBEC: A STUDY IN RELIGION AND GOVERNANCE

In Canada, over the last fifty years, Canadians have come to accept that the province of Québec is in some way, shape or form “different” than the other provinces or territories constituting the country.³⁴ This difference is perceived to be problematic by many Canadians inside and outside the Québec province. Politicians and others need to look at the historical antecedents to this problematic difference to find its genesis and find some solution to prevent this difference from becoming seriously disruptive to the political stability of the country. The core of the matter is what Québécois have described as *la survivance*, or simply put: survival, by which is meant the continuing existence of their particular culture as distinguishing their “national” identity.

To maintain the survival of a national identity, some critics suggest that *la survivance* requires that any contemporary practice of the faith requires changes within the institutional structure of the Church, otherwise their religion may become fossilized. The faithful need to be given the ecclesial tools previously denied them prior to the “Quiet Revolution” to help them on a daily basis to develop a personal relationship with Christ, so as to bring them back spiritually, and subsequently, physically into the Church.³⁵

To understand the present lapse in the practice of the faith in Québec from one perspective one must to look south of the border. The American Revolution was in reaction to King George III’s policies which imposed taxes on the colonial legislatures’ commercial interests to pay down the war debt. The king’s policies had their influence north of the border as well. Britain had successfully fought a war to expel its colonial rival France from North America. The elites of

³⁴ For a more detailed presentation of the perspective presented here see Savage, A. and P. Stuart, *The Catholic Faith and the Social Construction of Religion*.

³⁵ The “Quiet Revolution” identifies a period of time during the 1960’s when rapid social, political and cultural change took place in the Province which increased lay, or non-religious, influence in the life of the citizens.

colonial New England, feeling little need to abide by the political obligations they inherited, opposed this royal high-handedness and invoked their now famous slogan of “no taxation without representation.”³⁶ The American Revolution almost spread to the French colonials of New France when the Continental Congress sent an army via the Kennebec River in 1775 to convince the French colonials to join their cause for Republican liberty.

The British authorities were very keen to have the Roman Catholic Church as an ally. The British realized that the Roman Catholic Church was the sole remaining legitimate cultural expression that the French colonists had to represent them in the wake of the withdrawal of support of the colonies by France. Most, if not all French financiers, had gone back to France and the French colonial merchants had quickly become marginalized and cut off from their sources of financial capital and the Parisian entrepreneurs. Local French merchants quickly fell under the dominant and rapidly expanding Anglo-Scottish bourgeoisie of Québec. As elites to speak for the interests of the French in North America these Anglo-Scottish bourgeoisie were in second place for influencing the *status quo* following upon the liberal professionals (doctors, lawyers, and notaries).

In this context, the dominant French organ was the Roman Catholic Church. The British authorities sought the church as an ally to win over, or at least, ensure the compliance and cooperation of their French subjects. On their part the French clergy sought cooperation with the British crown as a means to increase their temporal power in a way that freed them from the *ancien régime* of France. Hence, the power of the French Roman Catholic Church grew under British rule. Each time the English colonies, with a French-speaking population, faced threats from either American

³⁶ The “elites” are to be understood in Crane Brinton’s sense: “In the Western tradition the leaders, the *aristoi*, the elite, the ruling classes do much to shape [their] ends, and to persuade the masses to accept them. But they do not wholly make these ends, or purposes, or values – at least, not in the traditional attitude of the West.” *The Shaping of Modern Thought*, (p. 235).

Republican attacks such as the invasions of 1775-76 and the war of 1812-14, and the threat of home-grown French colonial agitation during the Patriot uprisings of 1837-38, the French clergy always sided with the Crown in discouraging their flock from embracing any liberal-secular ideology from south of the border. In the minds of the French clergy embracing this liberal secular ideology would lead the faithful away from the faith, and away from their style of government. The French Church authorities were by nature Royalists. They saw the problems that the Roman Church was encountering in France during the revolution, with its property being forcibly confiscated, personnel being hunted down and killed, and orders of nuns and priests having to flee to Canada. Thus, the circumstances of the republican influence in France forged a co-operative bond between the royalist institutions of British North America and the institutions preserving the French Catholic cultural heritage.

Some historians have argued that the alliance between the Crown and the French Church was an inherently unhealthy one from the start. However, one must take into account that the clergy, by being the sole legitimate elite spokespersons for the French in North America and having control over education, hospitals, orphanages, etc., essentially guaranteed *la survivance* at that time. The French clergy were genuinely concerned with the spiritual welfare and the linguistic and cultural survival of their flock. They saw a greater benefit by keeping the French presence on the continent as part of the British Constitutional Monarchical system of government, than by joining any republican movement. Thus, French Catholicism in league with the Crown became a necessary condition for their survival as a nation. Even though conquered by the British, in the mind of the French clergy, the colonists could remain a cohesive society, held together by a common language and culture, and most of all, by the common bond of the Roman Catholic Faith, which reflected their cultural and linguistic heritage.

A backlash to the Church in Europe, which was promoting the faith in a traditionalist manner, was about to erupt in French-speaking North America. In the colony, the backlash was against liberal, American, secular and Republican ideas, which the clergy felt would take French-speaking colonists away from their faith thus leading to an erosion of their language and culture.

Immediately after the Conquest, the French colonists were somewhat divided. There were those who chose to cooperate with the British Crown on one side and those, who either passively or actively, resisted any alliance with the British Crown. This division continued after both world wars and has galvanized opinion on both sides ever since. But, this division did not stop French Canadians from being resolutely Catholic in their beliefs and in their approach to life and to their linguistic and cultural identity. However, the secular elite's control of the French public mind and their collective political interest was to gain the upper hand replacing the once dominant influence of the Church. The end result was that by the end of the Second World War French Canadian society was on the cusp of a radical transformation. Today, one must wonder what has the Quiet Revolution changed, now that the religious influence of the church is no longer dominant in Québec.

French Canadian culture in Québec, which had been evolving for two hundred years, appeared to have made a sudden break with the Church. French secularism, endorsing *laïcisation*, tried to supplant church dominance in government with the substitute of "religious statism." The newly emerging "Québec state," with its secular-humanist institutions of health care, education, and social services, would become the new vehicle in which Québécois would place their hopes, aspirations, dreams, and "prayers," for a better life. State-building unto itself was to become a social activity of Québec's "secular faith." The French in Québec were to put their faith in the neutrality of the civil state, which was unfettered by any moral notions of sin, good, bad, evil,

right, wrong, or anything else that smacked of a preachy and judgmental nature. In “religious statism” all citizens were to be treated equally with compassion, not to mention largesse, by this new all powerful, all benevolent ecclesiastical-style substitute.

In contemporary Québec, French Canadians are largely deprived of the opportunity for spiritual and faith-based institutions to address the ills which afflict them individually as persons and collectively as a society. Conservatives believe that the church needs to reassert its fundamental principles in the areas of the liturgy, public morality and social responsibility.³⁷ The church must support the fundamental importance of the heterosexual nuclear family, traditional gender roles for men and women, celibacy for clergy, more vocations to the female religious life, and encourage an appreciation for the re-sanctification of all human existence.

A sense of the sacred amongst people in Québec is palpable. The desire to live sacred, upstanding, virtuous, and noble lives is visible on a daily basis in the young men and women. However, they relate to fantasy fiction, dungeons and dragons, and all sorts of other mediievally-inspired types of role-playing games, either on the internet, as video games, or as board games. The ideals underpinning the medieval principles of the sacred and the profane, good and evil and their accompanying struggle for supremacy, fighting for the noble cause, winning the favour of the fair and virtuous damsel; these are all principles which are multiplied and propagated everywhere in the Québec of today. Observe the popularity of events such as medieval dinners, medieval clothing and theatrical apparel stores, movies with a whole variety of either medieval or quasi-medieval

³⁷ In short, as a rule, Conservatives favour retaining the link between church and monarchy in some resacralisation project. In this context, Ian Bradley writes that Prince Charles is “the perfect person to work out and practice a new model of spiritual monarchy, rooted in the historic tradition of Christian kingship while reaching out to embrace and affirm other faiths and standing unequivocally for the resacralisation and reintegration of society.” *God Save the Queen*, (p. 194).

story lines which seem to capture the imaginations of people, especially young people in the province.

To some living in Québec this social phenomenon indicates that the Church needs to re-sanctify its message, rather than dilute it with the thought of trying to be more progressive, or accommodating to a broader populace, or trying to be more agreeable, in a popular manner. Many continue to believe that “the faith” is the guardian or safe keeper of language, and by extension, of culture. This protection is something which no amount of transient “secular religion” can supplant. A people’s language and culture is inextricably intertwined with the fundamentals of religious faith. In the case of French Canadians, the language of the sacred is filled with notions of redemption, forgiveness, belief, incredulity, good, evil, punishment, reward, truth, falsehood, virtue, vice, sin, both venal and mortal, confession, vocation, discernment, epiphany, and mysticism. As well, the French profane language is equally full of references which are almost exclusively relate to their religious life; host, chalice, tabernacle, baptism, ciborium, virgin, and so on.

The people, whether they admit it or not, are harnessed to the yoke of the faith of their forefathers, they sometimes chafe at its prescriptions as well as its proscriptions. They often resent faith’s call to a sense of conscience underlying all the more the innate sense of being spiritual creatures in a material world, very much in need of God’s saving grace.

To the mind of the French-Canadian living in Québec the faith of their forefathers has made them who they are: a “different kind of people”, one chosen by God to live in a land of abundance, a land of ice and snow, of short, breathtaking summers, and long, hard winters. In the future a new understanding of the relationship of religion and governance, not the continuation of the traditional relationship of church and state, will be called upon to express this difference to French Canadians.

THE LESSON OF CUBA

Leslie Dewart's *Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson of Cuba*, published in 1963 is an essay in political philosophy. It investigates the relationship between the church and the state. He examines the Cuban political context and makes the point that the integration of the Christian theological order expressing the faith and the humanist philosophical order expressing political beliefs had blended in the Cuban government to the point that to distinguish between the two became an almost impossible task.

In pre-revolutionary Cuba it was easy to believe that to be a Christian was the same as being a supporter and preserver of the existing political state of affairs. The lesson to be learned from the Cuban experience, Dewart believes, is not so much that the faithful may reject the Church as relevant to their lives but, more significantly, that the Church may not remain spiritually relevant to the faithful in any future relationship between the church and the state. Something similar appears to have happened in the Province of Québec with respect to French Canadians and the church and state there.

It was within this understanding that Dewart wrote and pointed out that Cuban Christians, (and I include Québec Christians), ought to recognize that they are in a crisis and approaching the end of a classical and unified spiritual and political age, i.e., the approaching end of Christendom. The Cuban lesson, as understood by Dewart, is one indication of the philosophical crisis which reflects the political experience occurring in the West.

We cannot create something new in our political relationships, without becoming changed ourselves. This fact has great implications for the effects of the shift from the concept of the notion of government to governance. Gaining political expertise is a transforming activity that constitutes

a readjustment of ourselves to our environment and, as well, as a readjustment of our environmental institutions composed of language and culture. Our institutions of language and culture embody both civic and ecclesiastical values. However, civic and ecclesiastical values in the contemporary context tend to change at an obsolete rate of development. And, it is the experience of the faithful that when answers to existential questions, to which political expediency gives answers beforehand by an authority, such as the church or state, the faithful often need make no further effort to interpret their experience. This lack of effort on their part, in fact, does not empower them in either church or state affairs. Within the Church there is an attempt to correct this. The move from an ecclesiastical understanding to an ecclesial understanding of the Church is an attempt to correct this and empower the laity.

Governments and churches may have long misused their power but our current problem is not just how to correct the abuses of the past, but also how to plan to avoid such abuses in the future. Some see the solution to the ecclesiastical and political abuse of power in the absolute separation of church and state, or in terms of the separation of religion and governance. However, such a solution is problematic since the world of religion and governance, past abuses notwithstanding, does not constitute a theoretical context but an existential one. The fact is that the combination of the world of religion and governance constitutes our existential home, as Dewart states.³⁸

If his enquiry into cultural and linguistic traditions through a non-Hellenistic philosophy, has any Christian meaning for us today it is because Dewart is trying to reveal an appropriate response to life in the contemporary context of political and religious freedom. It is worth noting that with similar intent, but with a different philosophy, the Greeks of ancient times in order to carry out

³⁸ He does not use these terms explicitly, but rather describes their meaning contextually throughout the book.

their plan of political freedom presupposed through their philosophy the ideas to which their citizens needed to conform to achieve political harmony. Such harmonious conformity revealed the relationship of the citizens to the state. According to Dickinson, in Hellenist culture an atheist is, of necessity, antisocial and immoral. The man who does not believe in the gods cannot believe in the family or the state. Further, about a future application that was made of Hellenist philosophy he writes: “That dislocation of the spiritual which opposed the body to the soul, heaven to earth, the church to the state, the man of the world to the priest, was alien to the normal consciousness of the Greeks.”³⁹

So, in the relationship between religion and governance when enquiring phenomenologically, as believers, about what we must do if we are to do the right thing, we are enquiring into about what we have to do to bring into existence what does not yet exist. In this activity, we cannot do away with our moral creative freedom. Although an external (cognitive) or, internal (affective) force may constrain our activity in this process. To construct the political order correctly today we must be allowed the psychological and physical freedom which constitutes our religious status. We cannot avoid ruling ourselves politically, reasonably, humanely, and autonomously. We rule ourselves reasonably, because chaos is not inherent in the cosmic order of which we are a part; humanely because that characteristic distinguishes us from the brute, and autonomously because we are not enslaved within our environment. As human institutions one can expect that in the future both church (religion) and state (governance) will continue to alternate between identifying closely with each other, as well as, separating almost completely from each other.

³⁹ Dickinson, *Greek View of Life*, (p. 252).

Given this context, the best compromise that Western culture has developed to date is that of distinguishing between religion and governance without separating, nor uniting them. In human society religion and governance are distinguishable, but not separable. The political time has come for religion to engage the various particular governing forms without one particular form being necessary for all contexts. Thus, not being revealed, the form of civil governance is what humans say it is.

We have no experience out of which to create any governance models or religious forms for the future, except those current expressions with their roots in the past. This connection to our past is a good reason for religion to influence civil governance to avoid former mistakes when giving direction to the future. It is to be noted that religion's influence on civil governance is not restricted to the interpretation of the past, but it influences the needs of the future. New wineskins for new wine.

ATHEISM OR ANTITHEISM

Atheism, or better antitheism, is a concern for the Christian religion. Even though contemporary governments do not concern themselves with the content of the belief systems or, indeed the lack of any belief systems of its citizens. Given the focus of this book it is prudent to give some thought to the notion of modern atheism since it forms part of the social fabric of contemporary society. From a positive perspective, one contemporary religious philosopher, Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) is of the opinion that the believer can come to a deeper appreciation of religious theism by investigating atheism.⁴⁰ It is significant that modern atheism is a product of the Christian culture. A closer examination reveals that antitheism is what modern Christianity has produced and, in fact, not merely simple atheism. The terms are not the same. For the atheist, God is not able to be thought. For the antitheist, however, God must be thinkable in order to be denied. A French theologian narrows down the understanding of antitheism more specifically, according to Dewart. When examining these terms Dewart suggests, “We should begin, therefore, with a commonly accepted distinction, first made by Henri de Lubac and subsequently widely reproduced, between ‘atheism in the strict sense of the word, [and] *antitheism* or, more precisely *antichristianism*.”⁴¹ Obviously, the notion antichristianism is specifically a Christian concern.

When the issue is considered outside its Christian parameters, and the definition of religion is broadened to include an attitude to human existence regardless of the revealed religion, the Marxist version of atheism becomes significant. For Marxist atheism to have meaning, humanity must first be affirmed, in order to deny God. In Marxist atheism, the Christian God is replaced by another notion of the divinity whose being is rooted in humanism. Marxist atheists hold that human values

⁴⁰ Dewart, *Future of Belief*, (p. 53).

⁴¹ Dewart, *Future of Belief*, (p. 53, Dewart’s italics).

expressed in religious terms are rendered imperfect and could possibly even be a perversion of experience. But, a critical examination of the Marxist version of atheism could have benefits for the Christian believer in constructing his or her theism that has “come of age” within contemporary experience. Marxist atheism is a relative atheism, that is, one that can help believers disbelieve in false gods. In other words, Marxist atheism is not an absolute atheism that holds that nothing could possibly be God, according to Dewart’s understanding.⁴²

Christian, in particular Catholic, responses to the phenomenon of atheism came to the fore in 1965 when Pope Paul VI established the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers. In 1993 when Pope John Paul II joined the Secretariat for Non-Believers to the Pontifical Council for Culture this formally linked religion and culture in the contemporary Catholic mind. Upon investigation of the problem of atheism from a cultural perspective the question then arose: Can the church tolerate atheism in the same way it tolerates what it conceives as a false religious belief, or a cult with no religion? It would seem not. Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) wrote: “If the Church declares that the various kinds of worship should not have the same rights as the true religion, she does not thereby condemn those rulers who, in order to secure some great good or to avert some evil, permit each cult to exist” [cf. Denzinger, n. 1874]. These various kinds of worship, it seems, do not include atheism, or antitheism. Vatican II, in an attempt to update the church’s point of view through the Declaration on Religious Freedom, “acknowledged it to be a natural right that as rational and free agents all men should be able to respond, freely and responsibly, to the truth as each perceives it.”⁴³ However, atheism, antitheism and antichristianism are not perceived as true, according to Catholic teaching.

⁴² Dewart, *Future of Belief*, (p. 66).

⁴³ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. tolerance, (p. 103).

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